

Flexing my detective skills

Episode description

In this bonus episode, Andrew shares some stories about what he got up to last week, including searching for his wife's wallet and selling his PS4. He also tells you about an awesome new Culips feature, the interactive transcript. Then, in the vocabulary lesson, he teaches you a great phrasal verb: **to piece [something] together**.



Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hey everyone, how are you doing? Thanks for joining me for an English study session. It's great to be here with you today. This is a bonus episode of the Culips English Podcast that you're listening to. And my name is Andrew, I'll be your host for today. If you don't know me, or you don't know about Culips, let me briefly introduce myself and the podcast. I'm an English teacher who is originally from Canada. But now I live in South Korea with my little family, my wife, and my dog Pinky.

And here at Culips, we make lessons for intermediate and advanced English learners that my team and I design to be fun, and educational, and most importantly, useful for helping you reach your goals. I think you could think of Culips as a type of ladder, or a stepping stone that will help you increase your fluency to the point where you can start to watch movies, or read books, or listen to podcasts that were written by native speakers, for native speakers, or even to have comfortable conversations in English where you don't feel stressed, or you don't feel like you can express yourself the way you want to. I think that's the goal for many of you, right? Is to be able to do these things. So, we're keeping that goal in mind all the time, and we're doing our best to create the kind of lessons that will get you to that point and help you reach that goal.

And each week, we kick things off with a bonus episode, where I share some stories about what's new in my life and update you about what's going on behind the scenes at Culips. And also, I teach you a vocabulary expression. Now there's an absolutely free transcript for this episode that you can get by clicking the link in the description or by visiting Culips.com, our website. And if you find the transcript helpful, then I recommend checking it out.

And guys, I have a big announcement. I'm really excited to announce that the transcript for the bonus episodes is now interactive. So, if you're a Culips Member, maybe you've seen our interactive transcripts before, because it's a feature that we've been experimenting with on our members only series, which is called the Fluency Files. But I think for most of you, it will be new. So let me explain what the interactive transcript is. So essentially, you're able to listen to this episode, and the transcript will automatically highlight which word is being said in real time. So, it's much, much easier to follow along with the transcripts now than it was in the past, you can just see the words highlighted, as I say them, kind of almost like a karaoke video. But that's not the best part of the interactive transcript, in my opinion. The really cool thing is that you can click, or I guess if you're

using your mobile phone or tablet you could tap, click or tap on any word in the transcript, and the audio will start from that point again. So, you can just click anywhere, tap anywhere, and the audio will automatically start from that point. So, this makes it really easy if you want to repeat sentences again. For example, maybe you want to practice your pronunciation of one word, or repeat with one sentence, do some shadowing something like that, then you can just click the key sentence that you want to practice with again and again, and just listen to it over and over.

And guys, I have to be honest with you, I'm actually super jealous of you right now. I wish I had this kind of tool for my second language, Korean. I think this would be so, so helpful for me personally, and I wish there were this kind of tool out there for me when I study Korean, but unfortunately, there isn't. So maybe that is the motivation about why we tried to make this kind of tool at Culips, because I know it will be really helpful for you. And obviously, we'd love to get your feedback on it. So, if you think that something needs to be tweaked, or changed, or modified, please just let me know. Like, for example, if the font is too big or too small, or if the text is too light, or too dark, that kind of thing. If you could tell me what your experience is like using the interactive transcript, that would go a long way to helping us make it the best it can be. And we might have to make some small changes here and there to perfect it, but I'm sure that we can come up with an amazing tool here with your help. So please check out the interactive transcript and let me know what you think.

So, I've been racking my brain the last day or two trying to think of some stories to tell you about what I got up to last week. Racking my brain. Racking. R-A-C-K-I-N-G. Do you guys know that expression? Actually, if you're a longtime Culips listener, you may know it because we did cover it in a Culips episode, a Catch Word episode, way back when about two years ago in Catch Word episode 229, two hundred and twenty-nine. So, if you're a longtime listener, and you heard that lesson, then you may be familiar with racking your brain. But if it's new to you, that's cool too, let me explain what it means. So, to rack your brain means to think about something really, really hard. So, I've been thinking hard, racking my brain trying to think of some interesting stories to share with you all.

To be honest, my life is really kind of boring. It's not too interesting these days. So, I don't have too many adventures to talk about or anything like that. But I'm going to try my best just to talk about what's going on with me and share some stories from my day-to-day experiences. So last week, got off to a fantastic start, it was the best way to start a week. And that's because it was a holiday Monday, the final day of the Chuseok holiday here in

Korea. And for listeners around the world who aren't familiar with Chuseok, it is the fall harvest festival, which means it's kind of similar, I mean, it's really different, but it's most similar to the holiday Thanksgiving that we celebrate in Canada, and also in the USA as well. And I know for a lot of people, holidays like Chuseok or Thanksgiving can actually be really stressful and exhausting. And that's definitely the case for many people who have to host family gatherings, and do the cooking, and the cleaning, and that kind of thing. And I'm sure there are probably some of you listening, who definitely identify with that. But thankfully for me this year, I was lucky enough not to have to host, or cook, or clean, or do any of the work that comes with hosting a Chuseok gathering. And on Monday, it was just a rest day for me. So started the week off with a day off. Amazing! A great way to start the week.

I didn't take it easy all day though. My wife and I actually took advantage of the day off to get a bunch of little housework chores taken care of and clean up our place. And man, I have to say there's nothing better than tidying up the house and getting things looking clean and neat. I just love having a clean, tidy place. I think most of you would agree with me that you love having a clean, tidy place all the time. But it's hard to do. It's hard to keep our place looking pristine all the time. I mean, it's never dirty. But it definitely does get disorganized. It's hard to have a really well-organized house all of the time, especially when you're working full time like my wife and I are. So, we took advantage of the free time on Monday, just to get things orderly and clean. We put some good tunes on on our stereo and just listened to some music and did some cleaning. And it just felt great to get that task out of the way and completed.

And then in the afternoon, we just chilled out and relaxed and didn't really do much of anything. Just took it easy for the rest of Monday. We also had a couple of eventful moments this week. I'm not sure exactly when it was, maybe it was Tuesday, or maybe it was Wednesday, but one of those days from last week. My wife couldn't find her wallet. So, we started looking for it around our apartment, and we just couldn't find it anywhere. And we did what you do when you lose something. We did a scan of the whole house, and it just didn't turn up. Now my wife started to freak out a little bit because she had some money in her wallet. And there were some important cards in there, including one kind of credit card that she told me has some really great benefits attached to it, but apparently, it's been discontinued, and if you lose that card, you can't get it reissued again. It's kind of finished. The bank doesn't run that promotion anymore. So, it was really important for us to find the wallet. We didn't want to lose that really useful credit card.

A couple of days before we had been out and about in our neighborhood. And we had visited a ton of places that day, we went to a supermarket, we went to the bakery, we went to a park cafe, and some other places, too. It was just a day where we did lots of errands and went to many places. And we were worried that she might have forgotten the wallet in one of those places. Now, thankfully, in South Korea, people are actually really good about returning wallets and lost items. And you don't have to worry too, too much about people trying to empty all your bank accounts if they find, you know, you lost wallet or something. In Canada, on the other hand, I would be pretty worried about that, and I would immediately call the bank and cancel all of my cards. But in Korea, you don't have to worry about that happening as much. Never say never, but in general, it's a safer place in that regard.

Anyway, so while my wife and I were searching, I also went into detective mode, and I racked my brain trying to think about all the places we had visited when we went out a few days before. Now, I don't know if you've ever tried to do this but remembering things from even just a few days ago isn't an easy task. Like, for example, can you think about what you ate for lunch yesterday? It might take you a moment to remember that. But you could probably remember it right? You can probably remember what you ate for lunch yesterday. But what about two days ago? What did you eat for lunch two days ago? What about five days ago, right? It can get really, really difficult to think about things that we experienced just not too long ago. Our memories are actually incredibly poor a lot of the time, unfortunately. And my memory in particular, is never as good as I would like it to be. But for some reason, in that situation, I was able to really, clearly remember a lot of the day and I could remember my wife taking out her wallet to pay for some things at some of the stores and places that we visited. And because of that, we were able to eliminate a lot of the possible places where she could have lost the wallet. In English, we call this retracing our steps. Following our steps backward and just thinking about everywhere that you visited and everything that you did on that day.

So, we made a list of a few of the possible places where she might have lost her wallet. And she called those places to see if the wallet was there. But no dice. No dice. No dice, oh this is a good expression. No dice is just a slang expression that means we had no luck. So, no luck, no dice, same thing. So yeah, she called these places, no dice, no luck, wasn't able to find the wallet. However, when my wife was on the phone, I remembered that I had taken a picture of her that day. We were walking down this nice, pretty street, and my wife also looked pretty on that day too. And so suddenly, I decided that I should take a picture of this moment. And that in itself is actually kind of a miracle because I never

take pictures. I guess it's a bad habit. You know, I have this camera in my pocket all the time with my phone, but for whatever reason, I don't take many pictures at all, like maybe just a picture a month or something. I should remedy that, but that's just the way I am. Anyways, that day I did take a picture, and I was able to zoom in on the picture to see what outfit my wife was wearing. And when I zoomed in, I was able to see the shorts she was wearing. And I asked her "Hey, did you check the pocket in those shorts to see if your wallet is in there?" And my wife was like, "Oh my god, I thought that I was wearing a different pair of black shorts." So, she had checked some of her clothes, but she hadn't checked that particular pair of shorts. So, she ran to her closet to check and boom, there it was she found the wallet. She was super relieved and happy, and I was proud of myself for piecing together enough of the details from that day to help her find the wallet.

The other eventful occurrence from last week is that I sold my PlayStation 4. Do you guys remember? Just a few weeks ago, I told you that I bought a PS4. Well, I've sold it. The experiment in gaming really didn't last very long, did it? Even though I enjoyed playing the PS4, I just knew that it was going to suck me right in and that I'd spend too much time playing it. The games that came with the PS4, were long, time-consuming games. You know, when I bought it, I kind of had in mind that I could just play some short, casual, fun games, maybe with my wife or some friends, just from time to time, you know, just to relieve some stress or have some fun, that kind of thing. But all of the games that came with it were just these long, epic games that were single player. And I just knew that if I wanted to play these games, I was going to have to invest hours and hours into completing them, and I just didn't want to dump all that time into doing that.

So, instead of just letting the gaming system sit on my shelf, and collect dust, I tried to sell it. Now, you might remember that I bought the PS4, the PlayStation 4, from one of my friends, and he gave me a friend discount. And that means that he sold it to me at a cheap price, because we were friends. Well, I thought I would sell the PS4 at essentially the friend discount price too. But I was a little greedy, and I raised it just \$10 more than I bought it for. And I thought, well, if I sell this, then I can go to the cafe with my wife, and we can afford to buy a coffee with that extra \$10. So, we took some pictures of the PlayStation 4, and we made an ad and posted it online, but we didn't have any bites. We didn't have any bites. Interesting expression. Can you guess what that means? We didn't have any bites. I guess this is an expression that was originally used to talk about fishing, right? When you're fishing, you kind of throw your fishing line into the water and you hope that the fish will bite the bait. But, we also use it when we're talking about selling things online.

So, we put our ad online and we were hoping that we would get some interest, that somebody would send us a message and ask us some questions or want to buy the PS4. We can also call that a bite. But, we didn't get any bites, no one sent us a message about buying the PS4. And my wife was actually pretty pessimistic about selling it, because there were many other PS4s for sale, and some people were even selling them for a cheaper price than we were. But the difference between those PS4s and my PS4 was that mine came with so many accessories, there were games, there were controllers, there was a VR headset, it was like the whole, total package. So really, I thought I was selling it for a really cheap price when you consider all of the things that were included, and I felt confident that we'd be able to sell it because of all those extras. So anyways, days went by and nothing, still no bites.

But then finally, last week, on Thursday or Friday, sometime around, then we got a bite. Someone messaged us and wanted to buy the system. And he actually wanted to buy it while I was at work. So, my wife went and met him to make the deal while I was working. And actually, they decided to meet just at the end of my workday. So, as soon as I finished work, I started running home from work so that I could try to go with my wife while she met him, but I was just a little too slow. And like I said earlier, South Korea is one of the safest places in the world, actually, but even though it's really safe, it's always a little bit sketchy to meet strangers, especially when there's money involved. So, for that reason, my wife and the buyer, they met in a very public place with many people, and it's actually really close to a police station as well. So, I was running, trying to meet them to make the sale, but by the time I had arrived, my wife had already sold the PS4.

So anyways, that was fine. We were walking home together, and as we were walking home, I just asked her like, "You made sure that you included all of the cables, right?" And she was like, "Yeah, of course." "And you made sure that you included the game console, the big gaming system and the VR headset as well. Right? You didn't forget that?" And she was like, "Yeah, of course I included everything." And I asked her, "The games, right? You didn't forget to give the guy the games, right?" And then at that moment, she kind of panicked. She's like, "Oh my god! I didn't give him the games." So, she passed over the console and the controllers and all the cables and accessories, but she forgot to give the buyer the games. So, quickly she was searching in her phone trying to find his phone number and contact information, and while she was doing that, I ran home again, got a lot of exercise this day, ran home again to grab the games. Well while I was doing that, thankfully, my wife was able to contact him, and he was still in the neighborhood not too

far away. So, I just kept running and delivered the games to him. I think actually, he was probably a little bit shocked to see this random white guy just sprinting down the street full speed with a bag full of PlayStation games. But at the same time, I think he was probably relieved that we weren't tricking him or trying to rip him off, and it was just an accident that we forgot to not give him the games.

So that was my week, last week, everyone. As for what's up here at Culips, we released a new Simplified Speech episode on Thursday. And in that episode, Kassy tells us all about what it's like to make an international move. As you may know, Kassy recently moved to Thailand, and as you can imagine, making that kind of life changing move is no easy task. So, definitely tune into that episode to hear her interesting story, and also to improve your English communication skills at the same time. And on Friday, last week, Kassy and I also got together to record a few new episodes. And after too long of a delay, I think it's been a long time, we finally made some new Real Talk episodes. So, I'm not going to spill the beans quite yet and share what topics we covered but look forward to those episodes if you're a fan of Real Talk, and we'll try to release them as soon as we can, and I hope you'll find them really helpful. It's time for this week's vocabulary lesson.

So, guys, I wrap up each bonus episode with a vocabulary lesson, where I teach you a useful expression that will improve your English listening and speaking. Today's expression is a phrasal verb, it is to piece [something] together. To piece [something] together. And piece is spelt P-I-E-C-E. Like a smaller part of a whole, a fragment of something. You could also say piece together [something]. It's one of those phrasal verbs that's flexible and you can place the object at the end of the verb, or also in the middle between the verb and the preposition, both are fine. So, to piece [something] together, or to piece together [something], both are cool. So, I used this phrasal verb earlier in the episode when I was talking about flexing my detective skills and trying to help my wife locate where her last wallet was. Did you happen to hear when I said it earlier? If not, no worries, let's just rewind and go back and listen to that part of the episode a couple of more times.

Boom, there it was, she found the wallet. She was super relieved and happy. And I was proud of myself for piecing together enough of the details from that day to help her find the wallet.

So, what exactly does to piece together [something] mean? Well, it means to slowly but surely gather enough details or evidence to understand the full story of what happened. It's

like putting together a puzzle, right? I think that's the best image to imagine. When you put a puzzle together, you just have a bunch of small, different random pieces, and when you look at all the pieces, you don't really know what the image of the puzzle is going to be. But then, one by one, when you connect the pieces of the puzzle together, you can slowly but surely start to see the whole image of the completed puzzle. So, when I was helping my wife find her wallet, I was just trying to remember as much as I could, and those little bits of helpful information, when I collected enough of them, well eventually, we were able to know the whole story and locate where her wallet was.

As you can imagine this expression is used often when talking about police or detectives who are trying to solve a crime or even when journalists are trying to break an important news story. I've prepared some example sentences to help us understand this expression and how to use it. So, let's listen to those examples now. Here we go.

Example sentence number one.

When Ralph eventually pieces together what he did last night at the party, I think he'll be pretty embarrassed. He should probably drink a little less next time.

Let's break that example sentence down. So, in that example, we hear about a guy named Ralph, who drank a lot of alcohol at a party. And when he pieces together what he did at the party, then he will be embarrassed, OK? So, I don't know if any of you have had this experience, but sometimes if you drink a lot of alcohol, you can't really remember what you did the previous day, you wake up and you're like, "Oh my god, what did I do last night?" But over time, your memory starts to come back piece by piece by piece. So, this guy, Ralph, he will eventually piece together what he did, slowly remember, memory by memory by memory, and then he will realize that he did something really embarrassing, and he'll probably feel embarrassed and ashamed.

Example sentence number two.

The police were able to locate the runaway teenager by piecing together some clues from her social media posts.

Let's break this example down. In this example, we hear about a runaway teenager who was found by the police. So, this teenager ran away from home, probably worried her family, her family called the police, and the police did an investigation. And part of that investigation was checking out her social media posts, maybe her Instagram posts, and

from those images on Instagram, piece by piece, little by little, they were able to find out where that runaway teenager was and go find her and bring her back to her family.

Example sentence number three.

My friend Jason has a cool side gig. In his free time, he pieces together bikes from random used parts that he finds at the dump. Then, he sells them online.

Let's break this final example down. In this example we hear pieced together used in slightly a different way, OK? So, I wanted to give you another example of how we can use this phrasal verb to piece together [something] because in this example sentence, we hear about this character named Jason and he has a cool side gig. A side gig is like something you do in addition to your regular job to make money. So, this guy Jason in his free time, he has this side gig where he pieces together bicycles. So, what this means is that he goes to the dump, which is where people throw away old stuff. He looks through the things at the dump, and he tries to find different bicycle parts. And then with these random different parts, he builds a bicycle. So, he's able to piece together bikes using random different pieces, just like you would put together a puzzle, right? Just remember that image, and this expression is really easy to understand.

So, that's it for today, everyone. I hope you enjoyed this episode, and congratulations on starting off your week on the right foot by completing an English study session with me. If you have any questions or comments about anything you heard in this episode, just leave a comment on our websites or in our discussion forum. And finally, if you like learning with Culips, please support us by becoming a Culips Member, telling your friends about us, or following us on Instagram. So that is it everyone. Take care and I'll talk to you next time. Goodbye.

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